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POLITICAL VALUES IN EDUCATION.

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DISCUSSION WAS PRESENTED ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS. PHILOSOPHICAL TREATMENTS WERE PRESENTED ON THE EFFECTS OF POLITICAL LIFE UPON EDUCATION. DISCUSSION TOPICS INCLUDED THE POLITICAL SYSTEM, THE EDUCATIONAL SUBSYSTEM, THE DISSEMINATION OF VALUES, SANCTIONS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEFENSE. DEVELOPMENT OF CURRENT RESEARCH DESIGNS WAS FELT TO MEASURE POLITICAL ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS TO BE NECESSARY. (RS)

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By

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The attention that political science has devoted to education has had an erratic and confusing history. In the days of ancient Greece education assumed the most prominent position in political philosophy. Consider, for example, the writing of Plato. Certainly political science is justified in claiming Plato as one of its fathers, as is education. Indeed, Plato's entire political philosophy was inextricably intertwined with his educational theories.

Today political science has no Plato. There is, in political science as a whole, very little attention being paid to problems of education. It is hard to account for this situation. Political philosophy, as I have said, was extremely concerned with the role of education in political life. Not only Plato but Aristotle and a great many of the medieval political philosophers were very sensitive to the interaction between educational and political systems. There is no ready explanation for this phenomenon, but I would like to suggest at least a tentative speculation.

Political science, as it existed in the days of Plato and, indeed, as it existed until the early part of this century, was in fact, political philosophy. Political scientists address themselves to questions of values and thought to delineate the best possible solutions for political problems. Empirical political science which developed seriously in the United States in about the 1920's perhaps over-reacted to the speculative methods of the

philosophers. The philosophers, of course, did not address themselves to such practical questions as the effects of education on political life, or conversely, the effects of political life on education.

While it is true that the nature of the tasks of philosophers restricted their concern for the practical world of politics, this did not need to be true for the developing empirical political science. Political scientists had the opportunity to take the philosophers' ideas about education and convert them into a practical program of research. This, however, did not occur because empirical political science, in rejecting the methods of the philosophers, also rejected a great portion of their subject matter. Hence, political science, because of its growing empirical interests and its rejection of classical moral philosophy, gradually lost its incentive to explore the part played by education in political life. Consequently, as philosophy has become totally subordinate to empirical research, explorations of educational institutions have receded to a very marginal position in the discipline as a whole.

I recognize that my argument is, at best, superficial. One can hardly explain the neglect by political science of education purely in terms of the repudiation of moral philosophy. I think rather that another basic and perhaps truer source of the neglect lies in the way in which political science has developed as a

discipline, and this applies both to those aspects of political research which are empirically oriented and to those which continue to identify with political philosophy in the traditional mode of that word.

Let us look at what has happened to the study of political institutions in that typical area of political science that conceptualizes its task as the study of power relationships. In this context political scientists have examined educational institutions as one of a vast network of interest groups that seek to bring their influence to bear upon those who have the responsibility for making and executing public policy, such as executives, legislatures, and administrative structures. The task of political scientists who take this approach is to discover the way in which educational groups try to create a favorable environment for their own growth and development and to maximize their share of the various governmental budgets upon which they depend.

This approach, built upon group theory, is within the soundest traditions of political science. The pioneer study on group theory was done by Arthur Bentley[1] in 1908. Another classic work is that of David Truman.[2] Pendleton Herring[3] was also an early contributor. Others who have supported the general theory have been Bertram Gross,[4] Charles Hagan,[5] Earl Latham,[6] and Harmon Zeigler.[7]

None of these theoretical treatments of group conflict dealt

explicitly with education; however, not until very recently have social scientists taken the concepts of the group theorists and applied them to education. Now, however, I call your attention to at least five studies of education and public policy. At the state level there is State Politics and the Public Schools by Nicholas Masters, Robert Salisbury, and Thomas Elliott.[8] This is a study of pressure group politics in Missouri, Illinois, and Michigan. Steven K. Bailey, Richard T. Frost, Paul E. Marsh, and Robert C. Wood[9] have recently written a similar analysis, applying the theories and methodology to the Northeast.

Turning to local government, two recent studies have dealt with the problem of power structure and public education. First Warner Bloomberg and Morris Sunshine[10] have analyzed the interaction of leaders, publics and local power structures in terms of efforts to raise supporting revenues for school systems through local taxes. Ralph Kimbrough[11] has concerned himself more generally with the interaction of educational and political elites.

In the national arena by far the most impressive work is that by Frank Munger and Richard Fenno.[12] These political scientists have examined the interaction of formal groups on the very important question of federal aid to education. I am certain that there are other works of this nature, but I have selected those which are explicitly concerned with the application of group theory to education. With the exception of Kimbrough's, these

studies are sophisticated in social science methodology and are able to generalize beyond education. That is to say, the authors use education as an arena in which generalizations about social life can be developed.

An Alternative Approach--The Political System.

As an alternative to a power orientation toward politics, new kinds of questions regarding education are stimulated if we view political life as a system of behavior. Such a conceptualization leads us to a central question: What part do educational institutions play in maintaining this system? By asking the question in this way I shall not be presupposing that education must always contribute to the perpetuation of a given system; rather, I am raising the issue of the extent to which education in the particular circumstances helps the system to survive or contributes to those influences that lead the system off in the direction of change. Thus, in relating education problems of system maintenance, I am directly concerned with the part that education contributes to political stability and change.

A word needs to be said about the idea of system. What this concept serves to emphasize is the well-known fact that the major political activities in society are closely interrelated. What happens in one part of political life more frequently than not has important effects on some other aspect that may not, at first glance, seem to have an immediate connection. Any disturbance

in one part of the system needs to be traced through to other parts in order to understand how the initial disturbance affects the system.

Furthermore, the concept of a system suggests that it is not only useful but analytically possible to separate all of those aspects of social actions that have political relevance and link them together for purposes of research. This concept of the political system has been most thoroughly developed by David Easton in The Political System.[13]

What do we mean when we say that a social act has political relevance? To begin, as long as we look at any social act we cannot place it exclusively in the category of an economic, religious, political or any other kind of act. We look at it as a whole unit. We can say that a certain social act has clear consequences. If these consequesces more or less directly influence the way in which goods and services are produced and exchanged, we call them economic acts. On the other hand, if the consequences of an act are more or less directly related to the way in which binding or authoritative decisions are made for our society, we call them political acts. The central characteristics of political actions are: (1) that they are decisions which are accepted as authoritative, and (2) that they are accepted as authoritative by most members of the society most of the time. There are some kinds of institutions whose actions

are so heavily laden with political consequences that we usually call them political institutions. This is the case with political employees, legislatures, cohorts, voting, campaigning, cabinets, and so forth. These institutions are obviously sub-systems of the political system. There are other kinds of institutions, however, whose actions have political consequences but in a more remote sense.

The acts of religious organizations, trade unions, and so forth, have many consequences that are directed primarily to religious belief and economic problems, respectively. Because a large portion of the results of their actions fall into these categories, these institutions are not normally included among the strictly political institutions of our society. However, since the actions of each of these institutions may have considerable impact upon the kinds of decisions that are made for a society, to exclude the consequences of their behavior from a political system would be to take a restricted view of politics.

For this reason I include within the system not only the behavior of clearly political institutions but also those aspects of the actions of institutions that have political consequences, even though the major consequences and orientations of these institutions may lie in another direction.

If we look at educational institutions in this manner, we can see that their primary orientation is not toward politics.

Of all the consequences that flow from their activity, those that influence politics play only one part and not necessarily the most important part. Yet, the fact that some of the actions of educational institutions leave their mark upon the political process is sufficient reason for including these actions as part of the political system.

The Educational Sub-System.

With these assumptions in mind we now turn to the question of how we might examine the impact of education upon political life.

Mention has been made of one method--the examination of the way in which educational institutions organize into groups to bring influence to bear upon governmental structures. We may also seek to understand the effect that this conscious participation in the political process has upon the organization of education itself--that is to say, upon the kind of personnel which are hired in administrative and teaching posts, the curriculums which are adopted, the textbooks used, the relationships with the broader community, and the scope allowed for variety and experimentation. Such questions, however useful, would be raised in almost any matter of conceptualizing political life and therefore would not be peculiar to what I have called "system analysis." Once we adopt the idea that political life is systematic, we are led to inquire into the conditions that make it possible for the

system to maintain itself and to change. It is evident that among the numerous institutions and practices that make a contribution to stabilization and transformation of the political system, education looms large.

It is the purpose of the research that I am currently undertaking at the Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration to probe into the problem of how significant a part education does play. As far as I am able to ascertain, this is the first systematic exploration of this problem and I anticipate that it will take some years to complete. Therefore I cannot, at this time, answer whether or not my assumption that education does contribute substantially to system maintenance and change is correct.

History, however, is suggestive on this score. We have only to recall that when political systems undergo radical transformations, as for example after the French and Russian revolutions, the efforts of rulers were immediately directed toward revamping the entire educational system. New rulers have typically sensed that the success and continuity of their regimes are intertwined with the ideas and patterns of behavior transmitted through the educational facilities. They might have been wrong in so judging. Whether they were is the kind of problem I am trying to deal with.

My basic conceptualization is that education contributes to the integration and maintenance of a political system in this

manner--it helps to develop and transmit certain basic political orientations that must be shared within a certain range of variation by most members of any ongoing system. One of the fundamental conditions for the survival of a political system is that as the younger people in the society mature, they acquire the knowledge, values, and attitudes expected from the members of the system.

A society must be able to educate its members to the kinds of political roles that are expected of them. If we used the concept of socialization to describe the process through which the individual passes as he becomes a member of the society, we can identify that aspect of the process particularly relevant to the acquisition of political roles, as political socialization, or politicization. The maintenance of the system will depend in considerable degree on the extent to which the process of politicization has been successful. Those who wish to pursue in more detail are urged to consider the recent work of Daniel Goldrich.[14]

Many agencies and mechanisms contribute to the political socialization of members of a political system. From the point of view of the student of politics, educational institutions are important because of the way that they shape the kinds of basic orientations that an individual acquires. It is admittedly difficult at this point in my research to specify in advance, as it were, the part that educational institutions play as compared

with peer groups, the family, mass media of communication, and the political experiences of the individual. However, in our society schools get the child from at least the age of five and hold him until at least the age of fifteen. In that period the schools occupy an increasing portion of the child's or adolescent's day. If for no other reason than that the time at the disposal of educational institutions at this impressionable stage of development is so great we might expect the impact on political orientations to be of the equivalent force.

Although it is entirely possible that children develop latent political values as early as three or four, it is probably true that overt and explicit political values do not become part of the child's consciousness until about the age of twelve. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that the high schools assume more of the responsibility for political socialization than do the grammar schools.

Furthermore, if a technical society such as ours is to function, it is essential that schools have a prestigeful position among the institutions with which they must compete for the growing person's attention. When this position is coupled with the special sanctions available to schools that enhance their prestige, or at least their respect for their authority on the part of the pre-adult population, there is reason for believing that the schools undoubtedly play a significant part in the process of forming and

transmitting basic political orientations.

The Scope of My Research.

The task of the research that I am undertaking is to attempt to discover answersto such problems as these: What types of orientations find their way into the school system, not only through the instructional material but through the informal instruction that depends upon the knowledge and experience of the teaching staff? To what extent does the transmission of different types of political orientations relate significantly with the socioeconomic characteristics, political views, ethnicity, religion, and the like of the teaching staff?

It is difficult, of course, to speak of hypotheses at this point in a research project. However, I would like to suggest at least this tentative hypothesis: Educational institutions tend to mirror the political environment in which they find themselves and therefore do not, because of their very nature, contribute to political change. I realize that if this is the case that a great portion of the efforts of many American interest groups are wasted. If it is true that the schools reflect the dominant middle-class values of our society, why is it that the groups most concerned with preserving that society (or at least their image of that society) spend so much time and money trying to control the curriculum of schools? The recent study by Jack Nelson and Gene Roberts[15] merely indicates what any intelligent citizen

already knows--that there is a relatively well-organized and well-financed effort on the part of "right wing" interest groups to require that schools indoctrinate children with patriotic values.

No matter what you or I might think of the efforts of these groups, the fact remains that the schools are frequently the center of basic and fundamental community conflicts. If my hypothesis is correct a great deal of this energy is misdirected. Of course, I would not want to exclude the possibility that schools do hew the middle-class line precisely because they are under such pressure. I hope that my research will give me some basis for making a decision on this matter. If I take as my task the analysis of the relationship between the political and the educational system, the first step is to understand the political world of the most vital cog in the political-educational system, the teacher. There are, of course, administrators of the various sorts of educational apparatus. However, it is the teacher who has the most sustained face-to-face interaction with the pupil. It is the teacher who, whether deliberately or indirectly, suggests or emphasizes political values to the pupils.

To find out what teachers contribute to the political life of the social system, a stratified random sample of high school teachers from Oregon and the entire nation was selected. The sample consists of approximately 1000 teachers. Without becoming too technical, let me outline briefly the nature of these samples.

In Oregon the sample consists of 800 high school teachers. The state of Oregon is divided into three strata, based upon population of community. The first stratum is Portland, which is the only truly large community in Oregon. The next stratum consists of Eugene-Springfield and Salem. Finally, we go into the third stratum, consisting of the smaller communities, such as Medford, Klamath Falls, Albany, Bend, The Dalles, Pendleton, LaGrande, and Baker. From each of these strata approximately one-third of the sample was drawn. The national sample, which is being interviewed by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan, consists of approximately 200 teachers who will be given portions of the questionnaire I developed at the University of Oregon.

The purpose of the national sample is primarily to provide a control group by which to evaluate the conclusions reached in my statewide sample. That is to say, we would like to know if Oregon teachers are typical or atypical of a national sample. Of course, the local sample is useful because due to the various concentrations of population, one can select a sufficient number of teachers from various types of communities. The interview, conducted by professional interviewers, took approximately one and one-half hours to complete.

In addition to the sample of teachers we interviewed a smaller sample of the leaders of teacher organizations--specifically, the

Oregon Education Association. The purpose of interviewing the smaller sample of leaders was basically to give us the opportunity to evaluate differing perspectives on the role of teachers in political life as they vary with the role and status of the respondent.

I wish that it were possible for me to discuss the results of my inquiry in some detail with you. Unfortunately, the analysis of the data has not yet begun and it will be a year or so before I am in a position to make any genuinely scientific statements. What I wish to do is to outline some of my expectations regarding this data. Let me turn, then, to one of the first targets of my research--the political values of the teachers.

I want to know if teachers are "liberal" or "conservative." Are they "authoritarian?" Are they cynical about politics? The answers to these questions are found by means of the device of scaled (forced choice) responses to a series of statements which are well tested as attitude-measuring instruments. (For the technically minded we have control for the response set problem by means of reversed items.)

Let me give you an example of a few of these scaled items to make this point clearer. The respondent is shown a statement of which the following is typical. "Too many people today are spending their money on unnecessary things instead of saving or investing for the future." The respondent can react to this

statement according to any one of seven possible responses, ranging from strong agreement to strong disagreement. Including the reversed items, there are sixty statements to which the respondent can respond. These sixty statements can be collapsed into six scales measuring conservatism, liberalism, cynicism, alienation, personal rigidity, agreement with the "Protestant ethic," and educational progressivism.

At this point I have decided to rely primarily upon Lickert-type scaling and avoid the perplexing problems of unidimensionality suggested by Guttmann. However, it will be necessary, of course, to develop and make available some measure of the reliability of the scales. For this purpose we have decided to use the Kudar-Richardson Coefficient of Reliability for Guttmann-type attitude scales. Through this method we expect to be able to give each respondent a score on any of the six dimensions which I have outlined above. As I have said, it is assumed by many that teachers represent a threat to the status quo, hence the effort to control the content of teaching.

I am challenging this prevalent hypothesis by stating, as I have said, that educational institutions do not contribute to system change, but rather contribute to system maintenance. In other words, schools do not threaten the "establishment." I am suggesting that the basic function of the teacher, insofar as the transmission of ideology is concerned, is to maintain the prevalent

value system. That is to say, the education of American youth is geared toward the furthering of safe, sound, middle-class virtues. This hypothesis can be tested further by evaluating the political attitudes of teachers in comparison with those of the control group consisting of a general population sample.

I expect to find that, considered as a whole, teachers reflect just about the same degree of conservatism as does the population at large. Of course, one does not talk merely about "teachers" anymore than one speaks of "Westerners" or "Methodists." There are wide varieties of teacher values depending upon a multitude of socioeconomic characteristics, ethnic characteristics, and personality characteristics. Thus, I will describe what kinds of teachers (in terms of age, sex, community, subject being taught, political affiliation, and so forth) hold particular values.

I do not intend to discuss each dimension to be scaled with you, but I would like to mention one other scale dimension which I consider quite important. It is the dimension of "authoritarianism."

Teachers have to maintain strict discipline. It is therefore not surprising that questions of authority play a more important part in their lives than they do in the lives of non-teachers. Problems of order and stability assume crucial importance. Hence, concern with the preservation of hierarchical relationships predisposes the teacher toward system maintenance rather than change.

Change is difficult to cope with, thus teachers tend to encourage conformity. The encouragement of conformity is not so much a function of political ideology as it is a function of the basic classroom situation which I have described.

The Dissemination of Values.

Here I am concerned with the eternal question of facts versus values. Do teachers present their values in class or do they try to remain impartial? In college teaching the emphasis is generally upon objectivity. However, the high school teacher is encouraged—at least formally--to teach not only the cherished theories of American democracy, but also to develop an enthusiasm for democracy by means of open advocacy and more subtle means, such as frequent class elections. Occasionally, however, the encouragement of democracy conflicts with the desire to maintain an authoritarian structure and this conflict produces considerable tension in the life of the teacher.

In addition to such diffuse values as democracy, more specific values are frequently injected into the school setting. Current questions such as Medicare, more permanent issues such as labor-management relations, and such potentially explosive problems as race relations are examples of these specific types of values. Again, the question is: How does the teacher approach current unsolved problems of public policy? Is the role that of

advocate or of referee?

To get at this problem we have used a variation of the scale technique. Let me give you an example. The teachers are given the opportunity to agree or to disagree with the usual nuances through statements of which the following is typical. "The American form of government may not be perfect, but it is the best type of government yet devised by man."

In addition to agreeing or disagreeing with such statements, the teachers are asked to indicate whether they regard the statement as a fact which could be used in the classroom, a matter of opinion which could be expressed in the classroom, or a personal opinion which should not be expressed in the classroom.

Again, I hesitate to provide specific conclusions, but I would suggest that the advocate's role is the more common one among teachers.

Innitially it was felt that such questions would come up only in social studies classes; however, during the two pre-tests it was discovered that with rare exception subject matter is no barrier to the discussion of political issues. Since I found that the discussion of political problems is pervasive in high schools, the interview schedule was designed to probe in depth the teacher-pupil interaction on matters of public policy.

Sanctions.

Teachers, more than any other occupational group--except

perhaps the clergy--are constrained in their behavior by societal role expectations. Until very recently these constraints penetrated far into the private life of the teacher. Today, sanctions are directed more at the public aspects of teacher behavior.

By sanctions I mean actions of threats or threats of actions which are designed to prevent a person from undertaking a course of action deemed (by the sanctioner) as undesirable. In the case of teachers, certain types of political behavior have come under frequent sanction. The interview schedule examined such behavior as allowing an atheist to address the class, taking part in NAACP demonstrations, speaking in favor of the nationalization of heavy industry, and so forth. For these and other behaviors I have ascertained the extent to which the teacher feels constrained to avoid sanction-prone behavior.

Even though the teacher has an explicit value which he would like to convey to his students he may not do so because of his fear of the consequences. It would obviously be unreasonable to undertake a study of the political role of teachers while excluding the possibility that values and behaviors derived from values are not necessarily identical due to sanctioning.

In addition, perceptions of threatening groups are explored. Whom are teachers most afraid of? Who threatens the free expression of their political beliefs? Is it the John Birch Society or perhaps the principal of the school? Also, what kinds of

teachers are most likely to be aware of sanctions? Are the sanction-wary urban teachers, rural teachers, experienced teachers, or novice teachers?

Organizational Defense.

Finally, I would like to mention the other side of the coin of sanctioning. Teachers' associations of course are supposed to function as protective mechanisms. But do they? I have examined the role of the teacher and his organization in some detail in order to find out the extent to which the teachers actually believe their organizations are able to defend them. Here, of course, the interviews with the OEA leaders become crucial, because differing perceptions of the proper function of the organization in all probability do exist. I suspect, for example, that formal leaders are far more likely to view members as being dissatisfied than are the teachers themselves.

Conclusions.

It has been the purpose of this paper to provide you with a brief summary of my research and more generally to explain to you what I think political science can do to help us understand the role of education in society.

I recognize that this is only the beginning. One cannot be satisfied merely with interviewing teachers, one must ultimately go to the children themselves. For that purpose I am currently

developing a research design which will measure the political attitudes of high school students longitudinally. What I hope to be able to do is to begin with a sample of students as they enter the freshman class and re-interview them on a yearly basis so as to measure attitude change. As I see it, the tasks of understanding the interaction between educational institutions and political institutions is indeed vast--but at least we are making a beginning.

FOOTNOTES

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[14]Daniel Goldrich, "On the Concept of Politicization" in Robert S. Cahill & Steven B. Hencley, The Politics of Education and the Local Community, (Danville, Ill.: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc., 1964).

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